



Betrayal and Epiphany in James Joyce: A Select Study

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Abstract

The study inspects the theme of betrayal in the works of James Joyce to contest the over generalizations of biographical criticism that betrayal is his personal obsession. It deliberates that betrayal is chosen idea of James Joyce which has been chiselled into intricate aesthetic, Psychological, and philosophical structure. The papers demonstrate the evolution of personal sense of betrayal of Joyce into intellectualized epiphany through select reading. It showcases betrayal as emotive passion built into the works to serve the end of clinching a self-realizing identity.

Keywords: Betrayal, obsession, epiphany, emotive passion, self-realization, identity.

Introduction

Betrayal, is one of the unambiguous themes of James Joycean critics. James Joyce (2 February 1882 – 13 January 1941) is one of the intriguing and epoch-making writers of modern literature and Psychological Realism. The profound artistry of this Irish novelist, poet and literary critic ignites the minds of thinkers, artists and common readers, forever. The study of theme of betrayal in James Joyce's literary out (Fictional and Non-Fictional) is long running. The list of this school of criticism is ever-expanding, tucking many more names with the passage of time. However, the tradition of this scholarship is so extensive that some critics treat it in a taken granted for way. As the falcon's widening gyre move farther away from the

falconer, this line of inquiry spirals out; at times diverging from Joycean model of betrayal. A critic Neil Davison over emphasis the betrayal theme when he states that "The very idea of betrayal became, of course, a preoccupation of Joyce's adult life" (119). Some of his biographers like Richard Ellmann has sealed the image of Joyce as a person obsessed with betrayal. So, this paper sets out to realign the course of the Joycean betrayal criticism to the elemental foundations.

Methodology

The critical examination of the paper integrates biographical, historical perspective in qualitative textual and interpretative methodology. A thematic and psycho-literary analysis is conducted on James Joyce and his

novels *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, *Exiles* and *Ulysses*. Existing scholarship is contextualized by referring to critics like Neil Davison, Michael Seidel etc.

Source of Joycean Betrayal

Michael Seidel summates that theme of betrayal planted in Joyce's mind by Irish Politics. The tragic doom of Irish political leader Charles Stewart Parnell imprinted the concept betrayal on Joyce's individual perception. Joyce vindicates this fact multiple time in his works. The most popular and conspicuous one is in his Künstlerroman novel *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* (1916). Joyce's mouth piece in the novel, Stephen Dedalus does not mince words to verify the source of author's betrayal theme, "No honourable and sincere man . . . has given up to his life and his youth and his affections from the days of Tone to those of Parnell but you sold him to the enemy or failed him in need or reviled him and left him for another. And you invite me to be one of you. I'd see you damned first" (37).

When Joyce was an eight years old young boy, the majority of Irish Parliamentary Party members challenged the leadership of Charles Stewart Parnell. Battling through this acrimonious political turmoil, Parnell died of heart attack. His heart failure was caused by the stress and exhaustion he had suffered during those bitter times. Joyce was severely affected by the sad end of Parnell's leadership whose demise obscured the Irish national interests. For Joyce that event is not only an Irish political disruption but also personal and family disruption. The cherished and idealised family harmony has cracked opened to expose bitter fractions of the family. His father, John Joyce lashed out at the role of church in the death of noble leader of Ireland. His aunt contested her father and supported the church. Amidst this tumultuous public and private life, young Joyce also noted the betrayal of the Irish people to their nation, leader and to themselves. Since then, betrayal soaked into the memory and

contemplation of Joyce. It is a self-evident fact to him that his identity is a conflation of an artist and a meditation on betrayal, the cause of Parnell's fall. Literary career of Joyce takes off as a rhetorical reconstruction of the human world into the betrayers and the betrayed. Joyce configured his personal experience of betrayal into his literature. His portrayal of the theme is not an autobiographical outburst. Joyce caught the pulse of mysticism in betrayal and explored it through linguistic and thematic experimentation.

Nature of Joycean Betrayal

The word betrayal assumes two distinct meanings in Joyce's work. Firstly, betrayal signifies "to expose unintentionally." Secondly, it means to deliver into danger by treachery. Both the meanings operate in metaphorical synch. This interchangeable use can be noted in "Fenianism: The Last Fenian" (1907) where Joyce writes "in Ireland, at the crucial moment, an informer appear." In this extract echoes the dual sense of the word, exposure and deliverance into harm. The Prime and mature Joyce deployed betrayal as interpersonal and intrapersonal crisis, a threshold moment in the life of his characters.

A Literary Illustration of Betrayal

Betrayal is a recurring theme and the structural principle in Joyce's work. In *A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce formulates betrayal as an involuntary exposure to uncomfortable truths. The protagonist experiences family, religious, National betrayal. Stephen Dedalus upholds them as guiding authorities and seeks their guiding protection. Stephen holds a sentimental obedience to his beloved father. He ruins financial status of the family with his emotional and physical paralysis. Together with his father's failure, his mother's shallow religious faith ruins the honour of family. Such family manipulation unintentionally shatters his family identity.

Devasted Stephen immerses in religion and church services to get what he lost from his

family. The corruption and dubiousness of church shocks and shakes his identity to the core. This religious betrayal expels him into exile. Stephen is stifled to exercise his life at his liberty. The country fails to nurture one of its children. To bail himself out of institutional betrayal, Stephan resorts to self-betrayal and leaves the country. It can be examined that Joyce multi layered emotional betrayals in this novel functioning at inter-personal and intrapersonal.

Only play of Joyce *Exiles* (1918) offers another illustration to Joycean betrayal. Joyce is seasoned writer by now. Hence, he introduces a protagonist Richard Rowen who is much more mature and progressive than his predecessor, Stephen Dedalus. Richard Rowen seats in the tower of illusion of idealism He believes in the power of love and Freedom. The subject of his idealism Bertha Rowan and his own ideals betray him.

Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) has Conjugal betrayal. Leopold Bloom is betrayed by Molly Bloom who wants to push a man with whom she lost emotional connect. The entire novel unfolds under the anticipated meeting of Molly with Blazes Boylan. Leopold hangs onto emotional loyalty in physical exclusiveness of their marriage. From Conjugal betrayal, Joyce leads the readers to sense how life itself is a betrayal. In the introspection of Leopold where he does not rage at Molly for infidelity but sees it as Molly's attempt to tackle emotional detachment the couple suffer after the death their son Rudy.

Intellectualization or Epiphany

Joycean Betrayal evolves beyond common place gushing out personal experience of betrayal. James Joyce's brother Stanislaus wrote in his *Dublin Diary* of Joyce that his brother has "extraordinary moral courage...say the most shocking things... not because they are shocking merely, but because they are true." On reading his brother Joyce corrects his brother that moral courage does not describe him appropriately "When the Bard writes, he intellectualizes himself." This sounds

effortlessly profound and Joyce's clarity about his art. He presents emotion that are processed. For him writing is impersonal and so is his treatment of the theme of betrayal. As T.S. Eliot famously avers literary writing is an escape from emotions, Joycean writing is also an impersonal intellectualization of passions.

Intellectualization is as natural to Joyce as writing is. An interesting dimension about Joyce is that he an embattling psychologist. An anecdote from his life explains the virility of Joyce in claiming excellence in psychoanalysis. Once his patron Mrs. Edith Rockefeller McCormick wanted him to sit with her other close friend Carl Jung for a psychoanalysis. Joyce refused the proposal so curtly that he lost the patronage of the lady. He rejected his patron's idea saying he himself could psychoanalyse. Many scholars believe that Joyce was embattled with Freud and Jung. Joyce is a modern writer. Modern writers wrote with an experimentalize urge. Personal experience is the spring board for modern writers. But Joyce is a pure artist whose art never depreciates him to portray just his deep trauma. Betrayal did hit him too deep that it kept lingering in his outlook. Yet his writing is not a narcissistic memoir of betrayal. He saw the potential in the theme to encrypt the modern reality. Intellectualization does not suck away the emotions. It is to find some way to look upon and interpret those emotions without merely repeating them or reading through them. In other words, to weigh the emotions for what they are- to trace their origin and the ends they serve, and to what end they strive. According to Joyce Passion is motivation. Joyce "individual passion is the motive power of everything. We can see in his fiction an attempt to decode the nature of these passions down to the minute His intellectualization means dramatization of passions exhaustively, make hard separation between the role of betrayal in Joyce's personal life, involuntary response to hardship and as a motivational, consolatory, and justificatory too

and his analysis of these mindsets and others in his fiction.

Epiphany

Betrayal, as in traditional literature, does not destroy the characters. Betrayal is way of modern life, may only means to withstand the spiritual delusion of modern life. It is the inevitable means to break free from the institutional betrayal. Betrayal, the personal emotion is intellectualized into epiphany. James Joyce's coinage in literature Epiphany is the embodiment of intellectualism of passion motivation of Joyce.

James Joyce theorized a religious term Epiphany into aesthetic and psychological principle. The term has been defined as "a sudden spiritual manifestation....in vulgarity of speech or of gesture or in a memorable phase of the mind," in his incomplete work of Joyce "Stephen Dedalus." It is the authentic literary innovation of James Joyce that epiphany is the outcome of betrayal. The disillusionment of betrayal sparks the spiritual enlightenment to live for oneself unapologetically. Betrayal unpacks heart drenching emotions like disappointment, abandonment, infidelity, and guilt. Epiphany heals and leads the characters to sublime liberty.

In Joyce's works betrayal comes across a prerequisite to achieve that spiritual consciousness. Betrayals in *A Portrait of the artist as Young Man* dismantles the structures of inherited meanings of life. Betrayed by all the institutions including Catholic church, the sight of the girl standing in the water assumes the meaning of fresh possibility of sensuous and aesthetic life. The betrayals of his family, church and nation vice- verse is the epiphany leading him to wards artistic self-creation.

Richard Rowan in the play *Exiles* set freedom as an escape loop from the mundane life. His love towards Bertha and freedom in love backfire on him and betray him. The emotional vulnerability of neo progressive love

with freedom dries away the binary vision of life. Ambiguity caused by betrayal leads him toward psychological epiphany. It forces him to confront the limits of knowledge and fragility around trust. He cannot possess the consciousness of others.

Leopold Bloom realizes in *Ulysses* that life is ruthlessly unpredictable and there is no affirmation that it is unaffirmed. Life and human emotions exist in contradictions. The betrayal leads to an essential acceptance of harsh fact of life. This epiphany enlightens Leopold Bloom that human love survives not through possessions or purity but through empathy, endurance and acceptance. Across the selected study of James Joyce, it is clear that betrayal functions as strategic theme to liberate characters to define their renewed visions.

Conclusion

Betrayal transcends the personal injury and entrenches a psychological revelation in James Joyce works. It is neither "Preoccupation nor Obsession" to him. Joyce discovered a metaphorical thematic structure to portray modern conformity, alienation and self-realization. Hence, Joyce does not crucifix his characters with trauma of betrayal. He intellectualizes pain and unlocks new avenue of life opportunity to his characters. His distinguished contribution also lies in this turning wound to wisdom in subtle complexity.

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